

A walk by the River Almond in August

The flowering period had passed for many plant species but there was still plenty of interest. Between the Salvesen Steps and Fair a' Far Weir Butterbur leaves had grown very tall and one had to be careful not to brush against the Giant Hogweed plants that were hiding among them. Hedge Bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*) was gaining support by growing up stems of other plants. This is a native species and is slightly smaller than the one growing in the area of Dowie's Mill.



Butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*)



Probable brown-lipped snail (*Cepaea nemoralis*)



Bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*)

Slugs and snails were prevalent in this area. The black slug is variable in colour and can be brown and one appeared to be enjoying a flower of Himalayan Balsam.



Probable white-lipped snail (*Cepaea hortensis*)



A brown Black slug (*Arion ater*)

Butterbur was being eaten by several snail species including banded snails which are quite beautiful and very variable in appearance. Some variants have no bands whilst others may have up to five. Not surprisingly, the brown-lipped snail generally has a brown lip and the white-lipped banded snail a white lip but identification on this feature is problematic as morphs of each species can occur but in most cases the colouring will match the name.

The Garden snail was also present here. It is widely regarded as a pest in gardens and in agriculture. I was surprised to read that it is edible and used in France where it is known as 'petit gris' but I don't think I'll try it!



Garden snail (*Cornu asperum*)

Growing at the water's edge there was Celery-leaved Buttercup (only two plants!). This had not been recorded by the River Almond Walkway in Cramond and so was an exciting find. There was also Brooklime, a Veronica species with pretty blue flowers.



Celery-leaved Buttercup (*Ranunculus sceleratus*).

In the river and hidden from the walkway itself, there was a patch of Broad-leaved Pondweed which is frequently found throughout the UK in slowly flowing waters. Excessive amounts of this can be a problem for fishermen but the quantity growing here was limited at present.



Broad-leaved Pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*)

Around Fair a'Far Mill there was a wealth of species including several Willowherbs (Great Willowherb, Rosebay Willowherb, American Willowherb and Broad leaved Willowherb).



Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*)

An attractive fern (Maidenhair spleenwort) adorns the walls of the old mill along with a few specimens of the Brittle Bladder Fern.



Maidenhair spleenwort (*Asplenium trichomanes*)



Brittle bladder fern (*Cystopteris fragilis*)

Also on the old walls were a number of yellow flowers –Nipplewort, a Hawkweed and the attractive Goldenrod.



Goldenrod (*Solidago virgaurea*)

Further up river towards Cramond Himalayan Honeysuckle was in flower. It is native to East Asia and in the UK a garden escape. The fruit is enjoyed by birds which disperse the seeds—no doubt why it emerged in my garden! It is considered to be invasive in Australia and New Zealand.



Himalayan Honeysuckle (*Leycesteria formosa*)

There is so much wildlife to see on a walk down the Almond. Do get in touch if you have any queries or observations. It is now the season for fungi!

Isla Browning